

A STUDY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE PROGRAM  
OF THE GIFTED CHILD AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

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Ann Carol Taylor

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APPROVAL OF THESIS COMMITTEE:

Elysieth Weller

(Signature of Committee Member)

Lloyd N. Smith

(Signature of Committee Member)

Jean B. Sanders

(Signature of Committee Chairman)

June 28, 1962  
(Date)

APPROVAL FOR SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

Elmer J. Clark

(Dean of Graduate Studies)

July 2, 1962  
(Date)

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

In the past, much research has been devoted to the problem of the slow learner or remedial reader. Little attention has been given to the academically talented child because of his ability to grasp situations easily thus not creating a disturbance to others or his teacher. Recently, studies have been originated to investigate the ways in which gifted students could be challenged and through proper stimulation work to their capacity while maintaining good social relationships with their peers. The most effective means of stimulation and learning has been offered through children's literature. The study that has been presented in this paper in no way claims to be the entire answer for meeting the needs of gifted children, but offers a means of enriching and enlightening the child's life through reading.

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to determine the means of identifying the gifted child; (2) to present the structure of an individualized reading program; (3) to investigate the influence of child development upon his choice of literature; (4) to present supplementary materials to the literature program for bright children.

children; and (5) to determine the factors which create the child's interest in literature.

Importance of the study. It has been said that a teacher could provide a bright child with many kinds of books which might enrich his curriculum and he would learn effectively through his association with the reading matter. However, it has been the objective of this study to determine that for gifted children the difficulty of materials must not be confined to any specific grade level and that the full development of the child in relation to his adaptability to social situations and sharing of ideas must be considered. Another important aspect of the study has been developed from the theory that there must not be merely a horizontal enrichment, or that of reading many books of the same difficulty, for the child. The gifted must start where he is and go forward. It has thus been realized that the gifted must be offered an opportunity to extend his level of reading ability and comprehension and not be limited by reading material suitable for certain grade levels only.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Individualized reading program. The individual reading program has been described as a program in which the child, independently from others in the room, progresses at his own rate in his own level of reading. The child chooses

materials used in this situation, and through teacher guidance, he executes activities designed to supplement and enrich his reading experiences.

Superior child. Research in the special problems of gifted students has established the lower limits of such a group. Although the results have been far from creating an exact science, attempts to establish such a lower limit have usually involved the use of one or more of the various intelligence quotient scales. The superior child has been ranked as that child who tests between one hundred twenty or one hundred twenty-five and up. The superior child makes up the top 5 to 10 per cent of all unselected school children.

Gifted child. On the same basis of intelligence quotient scales, the gifted child has been determined as the child who tests between one hundred thirty or one hundred forty and up. This group composes one-fifth to one-tenth of the superior group and constitutes the top 1 to 3 per cent of the generality of school children.

Highly gifted child. This child has been determined through tests as being the child who tests between one hundred seventy and one hundred eighty and up. This group makes up one-tenth to one one-hundredth of the gifted group, and constitutes the top one in ten thousand to one hundred thousand



of the generality of school children.<sup>1</sup>

### III. ORGANIZATION OF REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

The remaining sections of this paper have been presented in the form of explanations and review of materials first so that an overall understanding may be obtained and then applied to the latter sections of the thesis. The last part of this study has dealt primarily with the growth of the gifted child and the ways in which literature may be related and applied to this growth. The summary and conclusions which have been drawn from this study emphasize the great role children's literature plays in the education, enrichment, and enjoyment in the life of a gifted child.

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<sup>1</sup>David C. Sanders, Elementary Education and the Academically Talented Pupil (Washington, D.C.: Department of Elementary School Principals, National Education Association, 1960), p. 32.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much research has been recorded concerning the use of standardized tests and the results of such testing among young children. The review of this material deals primarily with the identification of the gifted child through standardized intelligence and standardized achievement tests. Also included in this section is a review of materials concerned with the individualized reading program and its effects upon the gifted child. In conclusion, this section reviews the importance of meeting the needs of young, bright children through the use of suitable books for such children.

#### I. LITERATURE CONCERNED WITH THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE GIFTED CHILD

Testing program. The testing program has been the screening device most favored by teachers and administrators, largely because a testing program can be expressed numerically and compared with like data for other groups of students. Tests have the further advantage of being objective. There are various categories of tests of which only those adapted to the primary level have been discussed in the following sections.

Books and tests generally used among intelligence tests in the primary grades are the following: (1) The Pincus

Standardized intelligence tests. The standardized intelligence test has been the most widely used instrument for measuring intellectual ability. Many such tests have been devised, some meant to be administered to groups of students simultaneously, others designed to be administered individually. The most widespread practice involves a school-wide program of group tests. Pupils scoring above a certain point on these tests may then be given individual tests to verify the group findings. Individual test results are generally held to be considerably more accurate.

Many schools have extended individual testing to any children who have been felt to have measured inaccurately in the group tests. Thus, a student who, in the opinion of his teachers, had shown marked abilities in the classroom but who scored below the cut-off point on the group test was then given the individual test.

When tests are given repeatedly, over a period of time, the scores for any student vary considerably. Differences such as this have also been resolved through an individual testing program. In general, the highest score achieved most nearly reflected the ability of the student. Research has shown that it is fairly easy to score below one's real ability, because of various external influences, such as emotional condition, health, and situations of stress.

Among the more generally used group intelligence tests in the primary grades are the following: (1) The Pintner

Cunningham Primary Tests, which are used for kindergarten through the first half of the second grade, form part of a series called the Pintner General Ability Test: Verbal Series which can be used to show trends of growth of a child from his early schooling through his freshman year in college; (2) The Kuhlmann-Anderson Intelligence Test has been geared to the primary grades. While this test has been called a general intelligence test, instruments such as this primarily measure verbal and reasoning ability, which are the most important aspects of intelligence for successful schoolwork and in which gifted children achieve high, significant scores. The Kuhlmann-Anderson Intelligence Test has been useful chiefly for preliminary screening; any attempt to measure more accurately would call into focus one or more of the other types of tests available; (3) The Kuhlmann-Finch Tests have proved successful in measuring the general intelligence of children from grade one through grade twelve; (4) Good-enough Draw-A-Man tests have been designed for use with nonverbal children, up to and including the fifth grade. Many gifted children who do not read at an early age have proved to have a great learning and reading potential as indicated by the results of this test;<sup>1</sup> (5) The Davis-Eells

<sup>1</sup>David C. Sanders, Elementary Education and the Academically Talented Pupil (Washington, D.C.: Department of Elementary School Principals, National Education Association, 1960), p. 37.

Games Test has intended to eliminate insofar as possible the cultural factor, so that children from the lower socio-economic classes would be measured as accurately as those from the higher ones; (6) The California Mental Maturity Test has proved to be the most outstanding test of general scholastic aptitude for small children. It has been constructed to measure differential aptitudes, including verbal comprehension, word fluency, numerical ability, spatial imagery, associative memory and reasoning ability. The test has the advantage of revealing strengths and weaknesses in an individual's make-up; and (7) Stanford-Binet Scale and Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children are the most widely utilized individual intelligence tests, both administered by trained psychologists or students studying in that particular field. In both instances the results of both tests have been expressed in the terms of an intelligence quotient, although the Wechsler is designed to give a qualitative as well as a quantitative index of mental ability, through its score breakdowns.

Standardized achievement tests. Since one frequently encountered characteristic of the gifted child is his rate of achievement, standardized achievement tests are valuable for the identification of the gifted. Quite often the bright child has mastered the work being done by students a year or two ahead of him in their school work. The great advantage

achievement tests have over school grades is that they do not reflect teacher opinion; often the teacher's evaluation of the student's understanding of a subject is affected by extraneous concerns such as behavior and personality, no matter how impartial and objective he attempts to be. Furthermore, children accomplishing at a merely average rate in class, perhaps because of lack of stimulation or because of a desire to appear like everyone else, may be shown by a standardized test to be considerably farther along in the mastery of subject matter.

It has been felt that high achievement scores in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and arithmetic reasoning are especially significant in identifying children with superior mental ability. An achievement score of one and a half to two years above grade placement is usually considered significant, although the grade level of the child is of great importance. A gap of two years, for example, at grade one or grade two level is much more meaningful than a similar gap at grade eight or grade nine level, since it indicates a proportionally larger divergence.<sup>2</sup>

Among the commonly used achievement tests are the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, the Iowa Tests of Educational Development, the SRA Achievement Series, the Cooperative

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<sup>2</sup>Paul Witty, "Does the IQ Identify All Gifted Children?" National Parent Teacher, LI (October, 1957), 17.

General Achievement Tests, and others designed to measure specialized abilities.

Other standardized tests. Authorities in the field of testing have expressed differing views concerning the worth of standardized personality tests administered to the young child because the personality traits of average children or of gifted children are less likely to adhere to general patterns than are evidences of mental development or of achievement. Nonetheless, certain personality characteristics have often been found to be typical of bright children. Among those to be mentioned are enthusiasm for activities requiring mental effort, good citizenship, moral superiority, sensitivity to the feelings of others, cheerful and optimistic disposition, leadership potential, awareness of personal responsibility, and ease of adjustment to new challenges and situations.<sup>3</sup>

Standardized interest tests have proved to be significant in both identifying and understanding the individual special needs of a gifted child. Because the interests of gifted children tend to be more serious and somewhat deeper than those typical of the age group, these tests help to determine and reveal strengths of interests and various areas,

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<sup>3</sup>Emmet A. Hinkelman, "Intellectual Level and Personality Adjustment," Elementary School Journal, LII (October, 1951), 34.

the results of which would lead to a greater insight into certain materials which would capture the child's imagination.

Standardized special ability tests have been useful in identifying the differentiation of abilities which a student might show, as measured, for instance, by the achievement tests. Tests to measure abilities in music, art, and mechanical dexterity and ability are just a few types of aptitude tests that can be administered to the young gifted child. Some schools have even inaugurated systematic programs for the evaluation of performance in a number of areas not so easily measured by tests. In these instances faculties serve as judges or juries as students perform their abilities in music, art or mechanical arts.

Teacher-made tests in most cases have resembled the achievement test in that students have been tested over material covered in the class itself. Thus a child who has advanced farther than the class may not show evidence of advancement even though he may produce perfect test scores. However, if a child consistently scores high on tests and gives evidence that he has ability beyond the work being done, a resourceful teacher could develop tests on work other than that which is normally done in the room and design an interest test for the brighter students. These devices would probably reveal the advanced ability and items of interest which would appeal to and challenge the child.



Advantages of the standardized tests. In his study, Elementary Education and the Academically Talented Pupil, Sanders has sighted two main advantages of standardized tests. As a primary advantage, test results can be expressed numerically, thus making it possible to rank students on the basis of their performance. The numerical score is concise, clear and thus meaningful within the limits of the test.

The secondary advantage of such tests is that they are scaled to the performance of children throughout the country. Thus the score of one student can be compared with the national norms, the comparison offering a realistic view of the child's ability in relation ot many children, rather than to his own school population.

Disadvantages of standardized tests. Sanders continued in his study of analyzing the effectiveness of standardized tests by naming some disadvantages or weaknesses of using such tests. The main disadvantage Sanders found was that such tests are based at least to a certain degree on verbal skills. If a student has difficulty understanding the instructions or the questions, he may lose sufficient time so that the extent of his real ability may not be revealed.

Gifted children from culturally deprived environments with considerable innate ability have been excluded from some of the experiences common to most children at a certain

age, thus the verbal aspect of a standardized test may count heavily against such children.

A second disadvantage would be the difficulty of reading and interpreting test scores. The intelligence quotient score quoted should be identified accurately by the test on which it is based. Because of differences in testing instruments, a specific numerical score on one may have a different meaning from the same numerical score based on another test.

Another disadvantage of these tests has been the general weakness shared by all tests of the standardized type, that of discriminating less accurately at the higher levels than at the lower ones. A score in the upper range should therefore be interpreted with this weakness in mind. In looking at test scores it is important to note the highest possible score obtainable on the test and to keep in mind that any scores falling fairly near to this point may be expected to be only approximately differentiated.<sup>4</sup>

## II. LITERATURE ON THE INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM OF CREATIVE READING FOR THE GIFTED CHILD

In order for the gifted child to proceed at his own rate and to be challenged to work to his capacity, it has

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<sup>4</sup>Sanders, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

been found that an individualized creative reading program wherein the child assumes self-direction as well as receives teacher guidance is of great learning value to the child. Such a program as this has provided a classroom containing instructional materials covering every type of subject matter for all levels. Such diversified materials would offer supplementary filmstrips, records and charts which would expand the reading program in one grade level to cover a range of grade levels to meet the child's needs. The child is allowed to choose his own books and proceed at his own rate and thus to enjoy his adventure with literature.

During the individualized reading program, the child is able to practice words, answer questions, discuss his materials and read aloud to his teacher. He keeps a record with his teacher of the books he has read in which he records the title of the book, the date it was started, and the date of its completion. Also a record is kept of the number of conferences a teacher has with the child, the problems he may have with certain materials, and the progress he is making in skills. No formalized testing program is advised by writer in regard to the teacher's learning what the child knows about a book. Testing or the grading of book reports soon destroys the purpose of reading for enjoyment and interpretation. Reading for a "grade" stifles enthusiasm and encourages ready made answers to please the teacher and not

to please the reader. Thus much of the natural enjoyment and enrichment which come from reading are thwarted when a child must record his impressions and reactions to satisfy a teacher. Thus the degree of freedom by the individualized program of creative reading allows the gifted child to exclude meaningless drill and routine busy work from his daily learning experiences. Thus he is led into the program through self-direction, which is made possible through charts, books, pictures, puzzles, creative stories which he may produce through his own efforts, and original scripts which he may develop through the guidance of his teacher.

Hildreth, in her study, Teaching Reading, has pointed out some outstanding positive points in regard to the individualized reading program. She has stated that the permissive atmosphere this program creates requires no enforced conformity in the exercises and activities which most regimented reading programs require. In his own individual reading the child is able to choose his own books and thus develops a favorable attitude towards them besides becoming self-reliant and even discriminating in his selection of books and other materials. Such a free choice sparks motivation and purpose within the child as he concentrates on his task, and develops a greater interest in his work. The independent practice of choosing one's own books and progressing at his own rate is economical on the child's time, thus he need not

be held back by his slower fellow classmates. Also among the advantages of this program Hildreth emphasizes that the gifted child covers more ground in continuous reading and is not pressured by the group in any way. Also individualized reading increases the range, quality and quantity of reading for the bright child. He is thus able to use books of all types for study projects and activities and may even stimulate his classmates to appreciate and participate in his activities. The real joy in reading comes through the communication and sharing of what one reads. The gifted child who is excited about what he has read is eager to share his delight with his peers. Because of his attitude, other children become interested in books, and reading becomes contagious throughout the room. Because of the gifted child's superior mental ability, he is able to become a mature reader even at the first grade level and develop the basic reading skills of vocabulary, speed, fluency, extensive silent reading comprehension and critical thinking without undergoing the vast amount of exercises necessary for the average or below average child; thus acceleration becomes another advantage for the individualized program.<sup>5</sup>

After studying several reports concerning individual reading programs, the writer believes that special provisions

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<sup>5</sup>Gertrude Hildreth, Teaching Reading (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958), pp. 110-12.

should be made by a resourceful teacher to include the gifted child in many social activities in the classroom and provide opportunities for the child to share in the work of the room as much as possible as well as share his materials with others so as to provide a stimulus to the room so that he would not lose his relationship with his peers. Also careful planning of time and activities would have to be arranged by the teacher so as not to neglect any one child while working with such a program. A major mistake would be letting the gifted child proceed too much on his own without sufficient guidance from the teacher. The bright child cannot merely choose a book and read it for himself. He must have help from his teacher to build his knowledge of efficient ways of tackling new words, to learn to read differently for different purposes; to analyze materials read and to summarize the main points of informational reading. Even though he grasps skills and meanings more quickly than others, he needs help in these areas and should not be expected to teach himself. Thus a workable balance would have to be maintained for the best learning of all the children.

Selection and teaching. In some studies, librarians and the gifted have outlined criteria necessary for books for children use, and have discussed the impact of good literature upon the child. The writers contend that early studies help develop the child's taste for literature. As children

### III. LITERATURE ON BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG, GIFTED CHILD

Studies have shown that the pre-school age gifted child has probably already been introduced to books, magazines and newspapers at home. Reading has become a natural part of his living, and by the time he enters kindergarten or the first grade, he is reading with some fluency and meaningful comprehension. The tasks of the teacher then become those of providing raw materials for scrapbooks, making available many books of interest to the child, and developing the qualities of pride, ownership responsibilities and the appreciation for the existence of books. The use of books enrich the child's experience: they appeal to his humor, sympathy and imagination, offering him vicarious experiences which might not be feasible for him in real life.

The young child must have his own books which he cares for and shares with his family. Also these books must not be tiresome or trite, for children enjoy hearing books read aloud repeatedly, and they enjoy looking at the familiar pages.

Sumption and Luecking, in their study, Education of the Gifted, have outlined criteria necessary for books which children use, and have discussed the impact of good literature upon children. The writers contend that early stories help develop the child's taste for literature. As children

listen first and read later, they begin to select the literature that appeals to them. Well written sentences in books with interesting plots and actions excite the child, and the well-ordered development of a book makes it more meaningful to him. It has already been intimated that the young, gifted child learns to choose and reject books discriminately, and in his selection good pictures, content, size of the book, and print are the main objectives of his choices even though he may not reason this logically at his early age.

Parents and teachers in their guidance must provide a rich background of nursery rhymes, folk tales, and legends for the child so that his experiences with books will be varied and his appreciation for types of literature be greater.

In making a choice, variety both as to content and form of presentation widens the child's acquaintance with different types of books and appeals to particular interests of the child. Informational books, story books, picture books, nonsense rhymes and even anthologies all contribute to types of literature which should be made available to the gifted, young child. Criteria for the selection of informational books are accuracy of subject matter and its adaptation to the interests and level of understanding of the particular child. Criteria which offer some help in selecting stories for the young child are that the child be able to comprehend the content of the story, that it be related to



his interests, and that the story has plot, action, suspense, climax, and humor with the correct amount of repetition in its context.

The type of material construction of a book also impresses the young child. Sizes bigger than eight by eight inches prove to be hard for the pre-school child to handle. Dull-surfaced tough paper, a saddle sewn, stitched, or stapled binding which allows free handling without loosening of the pages, and a hard, washable cover are all details of construction which influence both the life and the child's enjoyment of the book.

Three aspects of poetry have made this phase of literature very exciting to young children. Sounds intrigue children because of natural enthusiasm for variety in sound. The following aspects of poetry have been found to entrance children: (1) children find sounds and variations of sounds fascinating; (2) the rhythm of poetry excites the young child; and (3) literature and poetry involve music; thus lullabies and poems set to musical tones enhance the child's appreciation for literature.<sup>6</sup>

Since one half of the gifted children have begun to read before regularly attending school, books become a fruit-

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<sup>6</sup>Merle R. Sumption and Evelyn M. Luecking, Education of the Gifted (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1960), p. 310.

ful way of learning.<sup>7</sup> Thus these children can be taught at an earlier age how to use library facilities since their grasp of reading is at a point where school libraries or public libraries could more easily meet their demands. In such an atmosphere the child could hear excellent stories well told, see many types of books which would be available to him, and he would grow in ability in the selection and use of books at a very early age. Many gifted children have initiated their own system of locating books and become very adept in utilizing library resources by the time they enter the first grade.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 313.

### CHAPTER III

## CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN RELATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GIFTED CHILD

### I. CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Choosing books for children has been a process based upon knowledge of child development, learning, and on the field of children's literature. Until one can understand the growth process, needs and interests of children, he cannot comprehend or provide for the number of experiences that children have as they grow. It has been shown that the gifted child is a complex one; thus his development intellectually and physically and his needs and demands become more complex as he grows. These complexities must be met, and only through knowledge of the child himself, his learning process and the rich experiences of literature can one adequately meet the challenge of stimulating the child to work to his capacity and use his ability both in learning and in enjoying life.

Characteristics of child development. Each child has been created as a unique individual; thus it is that no two children will be exactly alike or respond in the same manner to a given situation. Because of this uniqueness, each child has his own rights, needs, interests and capacities. The

gifted child is firstly a human being and must be considered as such. Literature appeals to children and their individuality by capturing the wonders, humor, and disappointments of childhood. Within certain age ranges there are similarities in patterns of physical, mental, social, and emotional growth, but each child differs enough so that teachers must guide children into expected performance of their capabilities.

During the primary years, the children experience egocentric interests in which they are concerned primarily with their immediate environment at school and at home. The happenings of everyday life intrigue the children and they feel comfortable reading about and handling familiar objects. The gifted child is no different in this respect, with the exception that he usually expands his interest to include outside phenomena and mysterious happenings.

At the early phase of development the child often seeks adult approval, but in contrast, he wants independence from adults too. Peer group acceptance becomes increasingly important to him. The gifted child, if not guided carefully at this point, often hides or tries to conceal his giftedness so that he will not appear to be different from his classmates.

A sense of humor is developed during this time and the children experience through their rapid growth an emotional

change which results in an unevenness in behavior. The rate of total growth within a child varies at different periods, thus it is that the reading interests and habits of the child vary at different stages of the child's growth.

The imagination of the gifted child continually expands to include the immediate world and the world of make-believe. The influence of society upon the child challenges his mind and he seeks adventuresome outlets through literature.

An excellent guide for ages and stages of primary children including the characteristics of development, implications upon learning and examples of books to be offered at certain points of growth has been prepared by Huck and Young and is presented in the Appendix A of this study.

Developmental tasks. Even though children differ in their rate of mental and physical growth and develop differently socially and emotionally, there are tasks which arise during certain periods of their lives which, when successfully achieved, cause the children to feel the satisfaction and approval of society. The achievement of one task leads to successful achievement of the tasks of the following level of growth. Such tasks have been referred to as developmental tasks and were first studied and defined by Havighurst's study, Developmental Tasks and Education. This study has helped to clarify the learnings to which an individual must adjust himself. In achieving these learnings, or tasks, the

individual becomes better able to understand and accept both himself as well as others. Books play an important role in guiding an individual through certain tasks, because they can offer identification, examples, justification and support to the concepts that must be mastered.

The developmental tasks outlined by Havighurst are as follow: a child must (1) develop a satisfactory self concept; (2) learn to get along with his peers; (3) learn his appropriate sex role; (4) develop skills in reading, communicating, and using numbers; (5) develop scientific and social concepts necessary for effective everyday living; (6) develop values, attitudes and conscience; and (7) develop self-direction.<sup>1</sup>

Once these points have been enumerated and understood, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to provide experiences for the gifted as well as for the average children in which these learnings may be achieved. Literature may then be an important fulfillment in realizing the purposes of education as indicated in the seven points above, and in providing the element of enjoyment so essential to well-rounded growth. The following discussion prepared by the writer illustrates the way in which books may meet the needs of gifted children in regard to their developmental tasks.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert J. Havighurst, Developmental Tasks and Education (New York: Longman's, Green and Company, Inc., 1950), p. 6.

In developing a satisfactory self concept of oneself, understanding must come to the reader as he identifies, imitates or recognizes similarities of himself and his problems to those of book characters. Krauss's book, Is This You? or Buck's, One Fine Day, both explore individuals as they react to situations and face the problems of everyday living.

As the bright child enjoys books, he also recognizes that they portray expectations of society and acceptable behavior patterns such as was Rush Melendy's experience in Enright's book, The Saturdays, when Rush visited the opera and learned audience decorum. Another vivid example would be Stover's What if Everybody Did It? in which children learn the responsibilities of respecting the rights of others and self control.

Literature also expresses for children the problems of everyday existence in living, growing, adjusting, and changing. In becoming aware of the growth process through books, the child can accept the changes more easily and understand more fully what is happening to him as he identifies with similar situations in the book he is reading. . . . and now, Miguel is Krungold's fine contribution to such a problem.

Helping the gifted child to recognize the problems others face and the need for defending, protecting and respecting others have become a significant problem. If a

child realizes his superiority, he may react in several ways some of which might be domination in his leadership of others, withdrawal in order to pursue his own interests, denial of his gift so as to be like the rest of the children, or satisfactory adjustment of self in relation to self and peers. To help the child achieve satisfactory adjustment, several books may be mentioned in which the rights of others are defended and problems of others are explored. Dr. Seuss's offering of Horton Hears a Who! and the Georgie series by Bright emphasize protection and defense of others. Facing problems and appreciating the plight of others has been well developed in the life of a Chinese boy in Yashima's Crow Boy. All these books offer insight into the lives of characters which become very real to children.

Many provisions of experiences have been made by literature in testing reactions to emotions, in understanding of these surges of feeling and in accepting them. Loneliness and sadness have been expressed in Baldwin's The Hermit of Crab Island. The mystery of death has been well handled by Brown in her book The Dead Bird. Not all emotions are those of sadness, however, and Udry has proved this in her gay book The Moon Jumpers. Happiness and abandon are exemplified also in Ets's In the Forest. Understanding and expressing emotion without fear of being ridiculed are of vital importance to the primary child. He must be made aware of the world in



which he lives and accept the situations involving emotion which confront him; well-written books help the child to adjust to such situations.

No matter how realistic literature may become to the gifted child, the fact remains that another phase of literature exists which greatly influences the healthy stimulation of the child's imagination. Through the magic of folk tales children are able to express their delight, concern, and joy in the adventures of talking beasts, witches, flying carpets, fairies, spells, and enchantments.

Most children are not ready for fairy tales in the early primary grades; however, the keen, more mature mind of the primary age gifted child is able to grasp the situations and oftentimes complex characterization presented in folk tales.

Such stories as "The Old Woman and Her Pig," "Tom Tit Tot," "The Story of the Three Bears," "Henny-Penny," "The Cock, the Mouse and the Little Red Hen" all appeal to the very young gifted child. Children of the first, second, and third grade find meaning and enjoyment from such tales as "Cinderella," "Beauty and the Beast," "Sleeping Beauty," and "The Four Musicians."

Stories with a moral and deeper meaning are of significant value to the children as they are introduced to "Aesop's Fables," "Aladdin's Lamp," or "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."

Likenesses in some stories representing different national and racial groups build an awareness of appreciation for others and tolerance of differences. Fantasies which stress these basic concepts of human relationships are "East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon," "Sadko," and "Urashimo Taro and the Princess of the Sea."

It has been demonstrated that constructive learnings are gained from the reading of folk tales. The value of such fantasies are often measured as a personal gain rather than an experience children could express in words.

Informational books have also helped the child grow in learning his appropriate sex role, developing values, attitudes and conscience, and in developing self-direction. Zim's series of science books, the True book series developed by various authors concerning areas of industry, transportation, health and institutions that affect our living, plus Greene's I Want to Be series all present accurate, factual information which gives the child an understanding and knowledge of the many things available around him which enrich his life.

Thus good literature has helped the child allay his fears, build a better understanding of the importance of relationships with others and given him an outlet in which he can understand himself and adjust to life situations more readily. For a further, more complete listing of appropriate

books suited to the developmental growth of the child, refer to Appendix A and Appendix B.

Fulfillment of basic needs. The gifted child, because of the demands made upon him as a potential leader, has required specific attention in the matter of fulfilling his basic needs or drives. The needs of the child as discussed by Huck and Young are those of (1) being loved and understood; (2) being successful and recognized; (3) being a member of a group of significance to the child; and (4) achieving and growing toward independence through new experiences.<sup>2</sup> Because these drives are the life substance of the child, it becomes necessary that these needs be brought into harmonious relationship with the personality of the child. Also the resourceful teacher and concerned parent must foster development of those parts of the child's personality which lag behind his intelligence.

Literature has been able to provide opportunities for various experiences through identification; however, careful attention has been focused on the ways in which literature has been presented to the child and what types of materials have been made available to him. The gifted child requires other materials than preprimers and primers. The basal text

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<sup>2</sup>Charlotte S. Huck and Doris A. Young, Children's Literature in the Elementary School (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 4.

series, if used as the only means of reading, seriously limit the child's horizons and imaginations as well as the innermost needs of adventure in new experiences and security in a world known to him. Easy books have not been the answer for the superior child because they do not serve the needs of the child who is always reading for himself. Placing the child in the top reading group may serve as significant membership or association with a group and offer recognition to the child, but he will even excel the other bright children of this group and grow restless with the type of work done.

Because of the existing factors, the gifted child has had to have special considerations and guidance in which he could grow as a secure individual and at the same time use his superior mental ability. Several opportunities have been offered to him through reading which have been discussed in various sections of this paper. The individualized creative reading program, concentration upon activities through reading, book adventures, taking trips via books, special reports, charts, graphs and book records plus the use of the library are all ways in which the gifted child has been able to fulfill his needs with literature. This has the sound of being theoretical with the absence of the human factor influencing the child's life; however, with resourceful teachers and parents providing the means of social adjustment for the child and his peers and adults, this need not create

an overwhelming problem. The highly gifted child has a drive toward obtaining the satisfactions of intellectual learning that characteristically out reaches all his other drives.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is that he can benefit from this association with many books and be socially adept at the same time.

The educational experiences of the gifted child depend upon two major considerations which are basic to fulfilling his needs. He must first be treated as a human being who is expected to play his role in society thus he must have a good general education to deal competently with himself, his environment, and with his fellow men. The second consideration is that as a potential leader the superior child must become acquainted with the record of human experience, be familiar with foreign cultures and be introduced to languages.<sup>4</sup> This is made possible through his early acquaintance with and thorough knowledge of the various types of literature.

## II. MATERIALS SUPPLEMENTING

### THE LITERATURE PROGRAM

Literature has been used as a springboard from which many resulting activities and projects have been produced.

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<sup>3</sup>Education of the Gifted (Washington, D.C.: National Education Policies Commission, 1950), p. 76.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

The gifted child has been granted a mind which expands possibilities and probes deeply into the meanings and opportunities afforded in literature. There is little contentment for the bright child to merely read a book and put it aside. His imagination has given life to the book and he sees ways in which the material can be expanded and used for his enjoyment and the pleasure of others. It has become the purpose of this section of the paper to explore the supplementary materials which enrich books and to investigate the ways in which teachers and gifted children may expand the field of literature.

Pupil participation. Certain conditions existing in the classroom have been deemed as being necessary to initiate a good literature program for children. A reading center secluded and away from the traffic of the room gives the child a sense of appreciation for and pride in the special meaning and enticement of books. The reading center should be colorful and comfortable with an adequate number of chairs, tables, bookshelves, bulletin boards and pictures.

As a special feeling is created towards reading through the use of a reading center, the gifted child soon sees the many possibilities that could evolve from the literature corner. If talented in constructing art objects, he could make mobiles of stories, events, or characters about

which he has read. There become countless opportunities for book arrangements, plus bulletin board displays, created and maintained by the children with little or no supervision from the teacher. The children could originate their own library and check out methods in the room. It would become their responsibility to review new books, share them with the class and offer them for check out purposes. New books should be added to the room at least once a month; unless books are changed frequently, some will go unnoticed.<sup>5</sup>

Besides being concerned with the reading section of the room, the gifted child could capture and record his literary imagination by writing original stories and poems. He could give oral or written book reviews and character sketches or illustrate stories that he has written. During unit work, he might write a radio skit or television production for classroom utilization or, if a departmentalized system of learning is used in the classroom, the child might choose a character from history, science, or the arts and write a sketch of the person's life or make up a story about the person. Instead of merely reporting on a book, the bright child would be able to express orally or in writing his own feelings and reactions to a book which he has read.

For the optimum development of the gifted child, he must be able to use and to expand upon the ideas and concepts

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<sup>5</sup>Huck and Young, op. cit., p. 5.

presented to him through literature. He is able to do this only when he is allowed to use his many intellectual resources and is able to explore the world of expressing himself through writing or creative activities.

Teacher responsibility. The better the teaching, the wider the spread will be as each child has been helped to progress at the speed of which he is capable. Enrichment tends to increase differences and to increase the spread between the most and least able of the classroom group.

It thus becomes the task of the teacher to provide for the gifted child many materials that will challenge and stimulate his learning process. Literature offers many types of books, such as fiction, nonfiction, biography, autobiography, history, drama, science, poetry, adventure series, and home and life writings.<sup>6</sup>

These books have been designed to meet the needs of the child, but used just in themselves, without reference to the work going on in the classroom or to the child's own growth, the books could fail to create a response from the reader. Therefore, pamphlets, fugitive materials, dictionaries, atlases, encyclopedias, slides, films, filmstrips, records, tapes, pictures, models, maps, charts and library

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<sup>6</sup>Merle R. Sumption and Evelyn M. Luecking, Education of the Gifted (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1960), p. 114.



resources must be included with books to meet the challenge of the gifted child.

Besides providing the necessary supplementary materials to the literature program, the teacher must fulfill certain demanding qualifications which would enable him to work effectively with the gifted child. The resourceful, well-prepared teacher needs: (1) a rich fund of information; (2) a versatility of interests; (3) an inquiring mind; (4) the ability to stimulate and inspire; (5) modesty; (6) a sense of social and professional responsibility; (7) freedom from jealousy; (8) freedom from excessive sensitivity to criticism; (9) an understanding of educational psychology; and (10) a special knowledge of the psychology and development of the gifted child.<sup>7</sup> All ten criteria required of a good teacher become a necessity when working with the gifted child because he has a greater incentive for learning and a capacity for self teaching that will leave the dull, slow, or poorly equipped teacher with little means of communication with or understanding of the child. Interesting means of motivation must be originated by the concerned teacher because the bright child is easily stimulated and appears to have more desire to learn than his other classmates. Thus he is more eager to complete books, find new ones, and investigate areas with which he is not yet familiar.

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<sup>7</sup>Education of the Gifted, op. cit., p. 71.

Besides being well trained and eager to equip himself with the necessary attitudes, materials and knowledge, the teacher has been charged with other responsibilities in regard to executing the literature program. A knowledge of building exciting dioramas and creating attractive showcases, plus working with the children in arranging bulletin boards, helps in bringing attention to books. Along with creating visual effects, the teacher has been able to challenge the listening abilities of her bright children by reading to them in order to generate further interest in books. Most modern television-reared children have developed interest and appreciation levels beyond their present reading ability levels. Thus teachers must develop in children a sensitivity to beautiful and descriptive language through the introduction of fine characterization and sound plot structure, factors which cannot be gained from television and radio. Also an awareness of sounds, rhythmic patterns of words and continuity of thoughts presented in passages should be pointed out to children. The bright child should have the opportunity to discern when something has been well written or when trite, clumsy phrases have been used to convey impressions or ideas.. Enjoying literature together heightens interest among the children and deepens their appreciations besides challenging the gifted to search for similar materials to satisfy their need for further identification and adventure with books.

Books, as they are read aloud, bring the group together as they live the experiences presented in the text. Reading parts of books for specific purposes has proved to be an exciting revelation of the possibilities inherent in each story or plot. Therefore, the results from a teacher's reading aloud, such as dramatization, creative writing, group discussion or creative dramatics, challenge the gifted as the book comes alive and real for him. Suggestions for books to read aloud to various groups of children have been prepared and presented in the Appendix B of this paper. These books or similar stories provide countless opportunities for children and teachers alike to explore the many ways in which they could be used through the suggestions previously discussed in the present chapter of this paper.

### III. FACTORS DETERMINING CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN LITERATURE

In order to present literature to a child or to interest him in a given subject or range of subjects, it has been established that one must understand and development, needs, and tasks of the child. To know the reasons why certain types of literature interest children more than others, the teacher must first know the individual child with whom he is working. The mental superiority can be established through testing, observation, and close contact with the child; the

general needs of the child can be learned intellectually from reports and research concerned with the gifted; and the developmental tasks can be fulfilled by careful planning and close association with the child.

However, there are several factors which determine a child's interest in literature which are concerned with the general make-up of the child himself. The first factor is that of physiological structure of the child. If a child is large and uncoordinated, he may enjoy reading about ballet or sports which require fine tone muscular movement. A very small but intelligent child may be fascinated with giants or large animals. The thin child might enjoy jocular, rotund characters portrayed in many books. Within the mind of the child may be the desire to read about people unlike or like himself. A teacher must be quick to notice which types of characters or styles of books appeal to the child.

A second factor to be considered is that of the sex of the child. Children acquire interests which bring approval through conformity to social expectations. Group pressures determine interest and interests become a part of the personality through the process of identification. Thus it is that very often girls would prefer to read about dolls, fairies, princesses or subject matter suited to feminine interests. Whereas, boys often find sport heroes, mechanical objects, space adventures, or scientific explorations, either fiction or nonfiction, of great interest to them.

The third determining factor is that of self concept. What the child thinks of himself or has been led to think determines in part his reaction to stimulating books. If the child's curiosity has been stunted because of any number of reasons, his interest in literature may possibly be limited. Socioeconomic background determines to a large degree the concept the gifted child may have of himself. Those with a rich background for living are led naturally into new experiences in books which may coincide with events that are common or that have been made known to the child. Therefore, confidence in themselves, plus a knowledge of the great adventures that lurk behind the covers of a book stimulate most gifted children to make an inventory of their interest and then to locate books which will meet their interests and curiosities.

Finally, the last factors determining the interest of children in literature are those elements of books which make them appeal to the children. In Dunn's study, Interest Factors in Primary Reading Material, which has become the primary source to which most modern authorities refer when studying interest and factors in reading materials for the lower grades, she revealed that primary gifted children respond positively to certain elements of a story's structure, such as (1) surprise; (2) a good plot; (3) meaningful repetition; (4) animal characterization; (5) narratives; (6) live-

liness; (7) familiar experience; (8) amusement; (9) magic; (10) excitement; and (11) attractive illustrations.<sup>8</sup> Elements which appeal to the children stimulate their desire to find such centers of interest in books. When children do find materials that they like this serves to whet their appetite for more reading and further adventure with books.

Thus it is that research has determined many ways in which children become interested in literature. Therefore, adults who are responsible for children's reading need to be aware of the guides exemplified in the physiological and mental development of a child, his needs, adjustment, and the ways in which he learns.

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<sup>8</sup>Fannie W. Dunn, Interest Factors in Primary Reading Material (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1921), pp. 10-11.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter has been to organize the important concepts and ideas of this paper in order to present the basic learnings necessary for understanding the relationship between children's literature and the role it plays in the education of the gifted child. In order to summarize the vast influences created by literature upon the child, brief references have been made regarding sections of the paper. The writer's reactions to the material read, recorded, and discussed in this paper have been included in the conclusions presented in the second section of this paper.

#### I. SUMMARY

In order to provide for the needs of the primary gifted child, the child must first be discovered and identified by the teacher. It has been a difficult task to recognize the young, bright child because of the many factors influencing his life. However, through effective testing measurements both verbal and nonverbal, a greater understanding of the abilities and potentialities of the young child have been achieved.

Once the child has been identified through proper testing and observation as being a mentally gifted child, it

becomes the responsibility of the educational program to meet and create challenges demanded by the child's ever increasing ability to learn. Reading through a creative children's literature individualized program has become a successful means of taking the child at his own level and letting him progress at his own rate. Just merely letting a child read ahead on his own has not been satisfactory; however, intensive programs of understanding the child's development, his relationship with himself and others, his needs and his capabilities all combine to reveal what kinds of literature would stimulate his imagination and enable him to learn and to benefit from and to enjoy books.

In providing for the fullest growth and greatest enjoyment from literature, the teacher has had to present supplementary materials to students in order to bring books into a meaningful focus in the child's life. Giving meaning to books, acknowledging progress, allowing free communication of a book's adventure all give the bright child an opportunity to exercise his mind, benefit from the material presented, gain appreciation and enjoyment for the book as well as build his relationship with his peers as he shares the book and its wealth with his age-mates.

It has been the purpose of this paper to stress the importance in the selection of suitable books for children. The gifted child has a unique position in that he is far



superior than even the top group of his peers. His interests range far and wide from the normally bright children. Thus, considering his great ability, the required elements of good literature and the needs of the child to be fulfilled, it has become a great responsibility to choose the correct book to fit the right child.

Literature has helped gifted children grow, accept their responsibilities as leaders, challenged their thinking, met their various needs, strengthened the bond of understanding between themselves and others and provided countless hours of pure enjoyment which have enriched their learning experiences.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

The writer, after careful consideration of this study has become aware of several factors which are necessary realizations in the classroom. The gifted child has been described as a human being and must be considered as such. His emotional, social, physical and mental needs have been described as being basically the same as those of normal intelligence children. Thus these basic needs must not be lost among the desires to challenge, stimulate, and motivate the child into newer and greater learnings.

Literature, if presented correctly to the gifted child, has been an enriching influence upon the learning

experiences of the child. However, the twofold purpose of literature and an effective reading program must not be lost. Besides the learning value offered in literature, one must not forget the great joy one derives from reading and sharing written work with others. If undue stress has been placed upon the learning value of books only, then the real value and charm of literature has been lost to the child forever.

Another observation made by the writer is the absence of a formal testing program involving children's literature. Creative interpretations, free expressions, thoughtful writings or other spontaneous outgrowths from literature have been quelled by programs designed to test or grade experiences children have had with literature. Freedom of association with books with the purpose of stimulating and capturing the imagination of the gifted child should be allowed rather than demanding graded results.

A final conclusion is an observation made of educators. Because the gifted child has far surpassed the thinking of his age-mates, and seriously challenges his teachers for new ideas and new ways of learning, the teacher is obligated to try new methods, present many types of literature, provide varied materials and work closely with the child in order that his needs might not be lost in the mediocrity of the stereotyped learning situations. Providing for the gifted child's fullest learning, and deepest enjoyment has not

proved to be an easy task, but the wealth of good children's literature has lightened the burden and granted many valuable hours of rich learning experiences and rewarding happiness.

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## APPENDIX



## APPENDIX A

### BOOKS FOR AGES AND STAGES<sup>1</sup>

#### Kindergarten

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Implications</u>	<u>Examples</u>
Rapid development of language	Interest in words, enjoyment of rhymes, nonsense and repetition	<u>Mother Goose</u>
Concepts and behavior are egocentered	Likes stories in which he is clearly identified	Brown, <u>Good Night Moon</u> Krauss, <u>The Growing Story</u> Rand, <u>I Know a Lot of Things</u>
Curious about his world	Stories about everyday experiences, pets, play-things, home, people in his immediate environment are enjoyed	Flack, <u>Angus and the Ducks</u> Lanski, <u>Papa Small</u> Simon, <u>The Daddy Days</u> Marino, <u>Where Are the Mothers?</u> Yashima, <u>Umbrella</u>
Enjoys imaginative play	Likes stories which personify the inanimate. Talking animals are appreciated	Gramatky, <u>Little Toot. Goldilocks and the Three Bears</u> Burton, <u>Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel</u>

<sup>1</sup>Charlotte S. Huck and Doris A. Young, Children's Literature in the Elementary School (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 4.

### Characteristics

Seeks warmth and security  
in relationships  
with adults

### Early Elementary

### Characteristics

Attention span  
increasing

Seek approval  
of adults

Continues to seek  
independence from  
adults

Continues to need warmth  
and security in adult  
relationships

Continued interest  
in the world around  
him--eager and curious

### Implications

Enjoys the individual atten-  
tion of storytime.  
Requires poetic justice  
and happy endings

### Implications

Short stories, or he may enjoy  
a continued story provided  
each chapter is a complete  
incident

Teacher's role is to make  
books important and  
reading enjoyable. Chil-  
dren need much praise

Needs opportunities to  
select books of his  
own choice

Books can provide examples  
of good family relation-  
ships

Needs wide variety of books

### Examples

Potter, Peter Rabbit  
Minarik, Little Bear  
Flack, Ask Mr. Bear  
Zolotow, The Night When  
Mother Went Away

### Examples

Zolotow, The Storm Book  
Aldis, Jane's Father  
MacDonald, Mrs. Piggle  
Wiggle  
Newell, The Little Old  
Woman Who Used Her Head

Sauer, Mike's House  
Duvoisin, Petunia  
Anglund, A Friend Is  
Someone Who Loves You

deRegniers, A Little  
House of Your Own  
Felt, Rosa-Too-Little

Flack, The New Pet  
Shane, The New Baby  
Zolotow, Big Brother

Zion, The Plant Sitter  
Miner, The True Book of  
Policemen and Firemen  
Conklin, I Like Cater-  
pillars  
Aldis, All Together

### Characteristics

Permanent teeth  
appear

Fairness, rules are  
very important  
to him

Humor is developing,  
enjoys incongruous  
situations

Is expected to  
achieve the  
developmental task  
of reading and  
comprehending

### Implications

Books can help the child  
accept physical changes

Equal opportunities to read  
and share books should be  
provided

Encourage appreciation of  
humor in literature.  
Reading aloud for pure  
fun has its place in the  
classroom

Opportunities to use many  
simple books other than  
the basic readers should  
be planned for the gifted.  
He may enjoy books about  
reading

### Examples

McCloskey, One Morning  
in Maine

Zolotow, Do You Know  
What I'll Do?  
Joslin, What Do You Say,  
Dear?  
Seuss, Horton Hears a  
Who!

Weisgard, The Clean Pig  
Kresilovsky, The Man  
Who Didn't Wash His  
Dishes

Kahl, The Duchess Bakes  
a Cake  
Rey, Curious George  
Gets a Medal

I Can Read Stories  
Beginning to Read Series  
Daugherty, Andy and the  
Lion

## APPENDIX B

## GUIDE FOR BOOKS TO READ ALOUD

Kindergarten

Ask Mr. Bear, Marjorie Flack, Macmillan, 1932.

Caps for Sale, Esphyr Slobodkina, Scott, 1947.

Carrot Seed, Ruth Krauss, Harper, 1945.

Little Bear's Sunday Breakfast, Janice, Lothrop, 1958.

Little Rabbit Who Wanted Red Wings, C. S. Bailey, Platt and Munk, 1931.

Little Toot, Hardie Gramatky, Putnam, 1939.

Man Who Didn't Wash His Dishes, Phyllis Krasilovsky, Doubleday, 1950.

Millions of Cats, Wanda Gag, Coward-McCann, 1928.

Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter, Warne, 1903.

First Grade

And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, Dr. Seuss, Vanguard, 1937.

Backward Day, Ruth Krauss, Harper, 1950.

Camel Who Took a Walk, Duvoisin, Dutton, 1951.

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Happy Lion, Louise Fatio, Whittlesey, 1954.

Make Way for Ducklings, Robert McCloskey, Viking, 1941.

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Second Grade

Amiable Giant, L. Slobodkin, Macmillan, 1955.

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Bears on Hemlock Mountain, Alice Dalgliesh, Scribner, 1952.

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Duchess Bakes a Cake, Virginia Kahl, Scribner, 1955.

Five Chinese Brothers, Claire Bishop, Coward-McCann, 1938.

Jane's Father, Dorothy Aldis, Putnam, 1954.

Madeline, Ludwig Bemelmans, Viking, 1939.

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Third Grade

Courage of Sarah Noble, Alice Dalgliesh, Scribner, 1954.

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